

Message Text

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43

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SUBJ: SOVIET PRESS ON ME

1. SUMMARY. SOVIET PRESS OVER WEEKEND CONTINUES MODERATE
LEVEL OF REPORTING ON PRESIDENT'S ME TRIP. TREATMENT OF
ME DEVELOPMENTS IN PRAVDA WEEKLY INTERNATIONAL REVIEW
(JUNE 16) INDICATES SOVIETS ARE INCREASINGLY
SENSITIVE TO WESTERN PRESS SUGGESTION (AND PERHAPS TO
DOMESTIC CRITICISM) THAT PRESIDENT'S TOUR DEMONSTRATES
USSR'S ME ROLE IS DECLINING. REVIEW CLAIMS IMPROVEMENT
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OF U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS IS PRODUCT OF NEW ME CLIMATE

STEMMING FROM PROGRESS TOWARD ME SETTLEMENT TO WHICH SOVIETS HAVE MADE MAJOR CONTRIBUTION. REVIEW DENIES BETTER U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS ENTAIL DECLINE IN SOVIET ME INFLUENCE. END SUMMARY.

2. DAMASCUS-DATELINED TASS SUMMARY (PRAVDA JUNE 17) OF SPEECHES BY ASAD AND PRESIDENT STRESSES REMARKS EMPHASIZING U.S. AND SYRIAN COMMITMENT TO SEARCH FOR ME SETTLEMENT AND MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF IMPORTANCE OF PALESTINIAN QUESTION. TASS REPORTS SYRIAN PRESIDENT'S EMPHASIS THAT LASTING ME PEACE CAN ONLY BE PEACE WHICH ENDS ISRAELI OCCUPATION AND OPPRESSION OF PALESTINIANS; PRESIDENT NIXON IS CITED AS EXPRESSING UNDERSTANDING FOR SYRIAN CONCERN ABOUT PALESTINIAN QUESTION. SOVIET PRESS ALSO NOTES RESUMPTION OF U.S.-SYRIAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND PLAYS BACK ASAD'S HOPE THAT PRESIDENT'S VISIT WILL MEAN BEGINNING OF NEW PHASE IN BILATERAL RELATIONS.

3. AGAINST BACKDROP OF PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO ME CAPITALS, PRAVDA INTERNATIONAL REVIEW TAKES UP CUDGELS AGAINST "BOURGEOIS PROPAGANDA" WHICH ASSERTS THAT U.S. IS EASING SOVIETS OUT OF ME. REVIEWER KOLESNICHENKO ATTACKS BELITTling OF SOVIET ROLE IN ME SETTLEMENT AND VALIANTLY TRIES TO REASSURE READERS THAT INCREASED U.S.-ARAB TIES IN NO WAY DIMINISH SOVIET ME ROLE OR SOVIET-ARAB FRIENDSHIP. ACCORDING KOLOSNIHENKO, SOVIET PEACE PROGRAM HAS CREATED BETTER CONDITIONS FOR GENERAL STRUGGLE AGAINST AGGRESSION, AND PROGRESS TOWARD ME SETTLEMENT - DISENGAGEMENT AND MOVEMENT TOWARD GENEVA CONFERENCE - MUST BE SEEN IN THIS CONTEXT.

4. TO BUTTRESS CASE PRAVDA COMMENTATOR NOTES THAT ASAD

AND OTHER ARAB LEADERS HAVE REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED IMPORTANCE OF SOVIET ME ROLE. TO GIVE LIE TO THOSE TALKING ABOUT "AMERICANIZATION" OF ME, HE CITES SECRETARY'S REMARKS TO EFFECT THAT U.S. DOES NOT SEEK TO EXPEL SOVIETS FROM ME AND COULD NOT DO SO IN ANY CASE. ON PRESIDENT'S ME TOUR KOLESNICHENKO REMINDS READERS THAT U.S. LONG SUPPORTED ISRAEL AND ARABS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN PERSON OF U.S. "JUSTLY SAW ACCOMPLICE OF ISRAELI AGGRESSORS." NEW ME CLIMATE - BY IMPLICATION

A RESULT OF SOVIET EFFORTS AS WELL AS THOSE OF U.S. - NOW PERMITS CHANGE IN CHARACTER OF U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS. HOWEVER, KOLESNICHENKO ASSERTS, "SOME SUPPORTERS OF COLD WAR LIKE TO INTERPRET NIXON VISIT IN OWN WAY AND USE IT FOR CAMPAIGN AIMED AT UNDERMINING SOVIET-

ARAB FRIENDSHIP." BUT ARABS THEMSELVES WILL REJECT
THESE EFFORTS. DEFENSIVE TONE OF PRAVDA REVIEW SUGGESTS
IT MAY BE A RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC CRITICS OF SOVIET ME
ROLE.

5. COVERAGE OF SYRIAN RESUMPTION OF CONTROL OVER FIRST
PORTIONS OF SASA SALIENT BY CORRESPONDENT OREKHOV
(PRAVDA JUNE 16-17) PRESENTS DEVELOPMENTS IN POSITIVE
LIGHT AS FIRST FRUITS OF SYRIAN VICTORY IN EFFORT TO
RECLAIM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.
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